

## REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the examination of the application. In view of the remarks that follow, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the outstanding rejections.

### Drawings:

Figure 4 has been amended to label the Figure as prior art. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the objection.

### Art Rejections:

Claims 1 – 5 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Figure 4 of the present application in view of JP 64-53948, hereinafter JP '948.

In response to the rejection, claims 1 and 5 have been amended to more clearly define the retracting mechanism as retracting the handling member away from an operative position adjacent the sheet passing the handling member when the detector detects the front edge of the sheet, and returning the handling member to the operative position when the detector detects a rear edge of the sheet after the detector detects a front edge of the sheet. Applicants submit that JP '948 does not overcome the admitted deficiency of Figure 4.

In the English Abstract of JP '948, there is mention of "as the rear end of the first sheet of paper is detected by the sensor SE3, the handling pad 120 is separated from the belt 101..." And, at lines 1-3, upper-right column of page 7 of JP '948, it states that: "After the rear edge of the first sheet P1 goes through the sheet re-feeder

part 100 and is detected by the sensor SE3, the handling pad 120 is separated from the sheet re-feeder belt 101".

Accordingly, in JP '948, after the first sheet is conveyed, the handling pad 120 is separated (retracted away from an operative position) from the conveying belt in order not to convey the second sheet. Thus, when the rear edge of the sheet is detected, the pad 120 is moved into an inoperative position.

On the other hand, in the present invention, the handling member is retracted away from the sheet while the sheet is conveyed and is moved back to the operative position upon detection of the rear end of the sheet. That is the opposite of the present invention. Accordingly, claims 1 and 5, and dependent claims 2 – 4, are patentable over the applied art.

Therefore, the operation of the retracting mechanism of the present invention is different from that of JP 64-53948A.

The Examiner is thus respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections.

In the event that there are any questions concerning this Amendment, or the application in general, the Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned attorney so that prosecution of the application may be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,

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**AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:**

Submitted herewith is a replacement sheet for Figure 4.